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# Japan's Renaissance and Its Effect to ASEAN

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## Abstract

*Japan has developed a new security policy against China in East China Sea, which has increased tension in that region. Japan's new leadership under Shinzo Abe, who has conservative political view, has unbeatable policy against China's hegemony. Abe revised Japan Self-Defence Forces role in the Japanese Constitution by making critical amendments on particular articles, which should be seen as Japan's bargaining power against China. The two major powers in East China Sea can be seen as security dilemma of other states. Pursuit of power and hegemony will influence other major actors in the global world system and also small states. Japan's new security policy is as a renaissance of Japan's hegemony or pursuit of power in East China Sea. By using bargaining model of war, Japan's security policy will determine overall situation in South China Sea or particularly in East China Sea: whether it will remain of high threat or balance of threat rather than balance of power, or it will face possible conflict in the future.*

Keywords: Japan, Shinzo Abe, China, bargaining model, ASEAN.

## Introduction

China's airspace claim over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands in the East China Sea has raised political tensions in the region. China showed off its existence as a country that was at odds with Japan and the West. Seeing China's offensive pursuit of power in the region, Japan quickly responded to the situation by taking various strategic measures in order to balance. Japan performed a symbolic diplomatic step with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's historical visit to the Yasukuni Shrine. Yasukuni Shrine is the final resting place of Japanese wartime heroes, including fourteen key figures who took responsibility for World War II. This step alone had boiled relations with China and

its allies, which could be seen in the KCNA editorial that called Abe 'Asian Hitler' and *Rodong Sinmun* editorial that called Abe 'maniac militarists' (*Kompas*, February 6, 2012, p.10). Abe's visit to the shrine also raised US's and UK's responses. Both countries paid more respect to China than Japan about the political impact of visit to the Yasukuni Shrine. British's Ambassador to Japan suggested Abe not to visit the shrine. American Ambassador to Japan also suggested Japan not to exacerbate the situation which could further raise tensions in East Asia.

Furthermore, Japan had also set up a special panel headed by Shunji Yanai, former Japanese ambassador to US, which discussed about the Japan Self-Defence Forces role in the Japanese Constitution.

Japan had been avoiding collective defence after the World War II. However, the current draft proposed that Japan could provide assistance to its allies. It was a major strategic change of Japanese foreign policy, particularly related to the East China Sea, and might be expanded to other regions such as Southeast Asian because Japan's huge investments and donations in the region.

Even though China and Japan (with the US) seemed to be at enmity with each other, uniquely the US as Japan's ally also continued to provide assistance to China as well as to Japan. The US had been provided assistance that led to environmental improvement, Tibet issue, and democratization on China's continent. USAID assistance had been channeled directly to the citizens of China.

Facing the East China Sea conflict, Japan also had to pay such a large order to buy the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. The advantage was the economic growth that Japan had targeted by its expansion in Asia. Besides, Japan is also seeking to maintain its trade transactions using Yen exchange rate. By promoting the growth of the Japanese economy, this policy will benefit greatly in terms of influence and US support.

Similarly, Japan will provide an opportunity to renew the role and posture of its military. On the other hand, China will make efforts to expand its military role and growing influence of its ideology to maintain its national interests. Relations between Japan and China, however, remain a game of utilizing bargaining power. Therefore, it is the most proper to examine using bargaining model to measure rivalry between those states.

### **Conceptual Theory: Bargaining Model**

Bargaining model can be said as a new model in the analysis of politics and war. Although politics and war are two different things, but Carl von Clausewitz had expressed that "war is politics by other means". The bargaining model is an analytical model that is still being debated and still requires interdisciplinary enrichment. This model also still needs to be tested primarily related to the ability estimates, the completion estimates, and the exchange of interests between the two rival groups (Reiter, 2003).

The bargaining model is traditionally linked closely to the economic behaviour in trade. The bargaining process is carried out by at least two actors in order to reach agreement on a treaty (Kennan & Wilson, 1993). The bargaining model itself in politics and war is a new alternative in the analysis. The bargaining model focuses on the analysis of the causes, prosecution, termination and the consequences in a war as a process of theoretical consistency (Reiter, 2003).

All factors are debated scientifically, as an integral part altogether or separately. Some researchers believe there are possibly two, or one, factors in a single case. Schelling (1960) focused on the causes, while Kecskemeti (1958), Ikle (1991), and Pillar (1983) focused on the termination. Blainey (1973) studied on the causes and consequences (Reiter, 2003). Those point of views explain conflicts in Europe and Western colonization of Africa and Asia.

Thomas Schelling (1960) stated that conflict situations are essentially bargaining situations. So this model is increasingly constructed and applied in the dynamics of government and legislators in some countries (Reiter, 2003). This model still requires ongoing enrichment from the disciplines of war, International Relations, psychology, public policy, etc. The

conceptual theory of bargaining model can be applied in examining Japanese foreign policy reconstruction under Shinzo Abe's administration.

In the bargaining model, the causes of war rest on three conditions, explicitly: 1) the absence of an agreement between the warring parties, 2) the lack of agreement to avoid battle in the future, and 3) inability of bargaining to prevent war if the disputed items remain unresolved (Fearon, 1995, 1998).

To look at Abe's conservative policy, it is more appropriate to use the Realist perspective in the study of International Relations, in which a state perceives other states as threats. Thus, states try to achieve balance of power in the international system to survive in the midst of the magnitude of the pressure / interest of other states.

### **The Absence of an Agreement between Japan and China**

The cause of Japan's renaissance was the absence of an agreement between China and Japan over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands after World War II. China had never wanted this issue to be resolved through international institutions. Even though Japan had bought the region, the aerial territorial boundaries claimed by Japan and China are overlapping.

On another topic, China has continuously been demanding for prosecution of Japanese war crimes. But Japan considered that the wartime Japanese soldiers and officers had been prosecuted for their war crimes. Implicitly, Japanese protest against China's and other countries' psychological distress was symbolized by Abe's visit to the Yasukuni Shrine.

Prosecutions, in bargaining model, are made since war or conflict justified by the forces involved. When the forces try to reach one or more tasks such as the

destruction of the opponents' will, destruction of civilian property and others, it is justification of war. In the case of between Japan and China, occupation of Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands unilaterally by China or Japan can be seen as justification of war and bargaining model is applied.

Thus the military had been used as part of the bargaining process to achieve the goals. Even though open conflict between Japan and China has never happened yet, the Abe's administration concerns regarding China had raised the steps taken by Japan leading to a new balance of power. Abe's concerns were well-founded as a result of the fact that China had been arresting fishermen in the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands and installing its flag on the Paracel and Spratly Islands.

In the bargaining model, termination is achieved when: 1) the troops reached a total occupation or destruction of the enemy that cannot survive as a total of victory achievement, and 2) forces can reduce uncertainty about the abilities or the destruction of the opponent. Those two factors have materialized in the form of China's Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) over the Senkaku/Diaoyu.

Japan assumed that China would expand its territory. Abe finally sought to reposition over military and defence policy by trying to gradually amend the Japanese Constitution's Article 9 relating to the role of the Japan Self-Defence Forces by calling for a revision of Article 96 specifying the process for making amendments. It can lead to a new perspective on the pacific constitution that has prevailed so far. Thus the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands seem like hotspot for both Japan and China and remain having overlapping claim over it.

In the bargaining model, consequences focus more on post-war stability required. The longer a war lasts, the longer the peace created will last (Smith & Stam, 2002). Yet this stage has not happened until now.

Retrospective war wounds between the two countries had led to no absolute agreement over the victims of violence due to war between Chinese and Japanese. After war, Japan has also been claiming to be a victim of war crimes.

### **War May Occur as a Result of Lack of Agreement to Avoid Battle in the Future**

Foreign policy depends on who holds power (Yanyan, 2007:3; Mas'oed, 1994:184). During his visit to Washington, Shinzo Abe stated that "Japan is back". With great support from the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Abe has a large curiosity to revise the Japanese Constitution's Article 96 to revise Article 9 in the pacific Constitution.

Public who support the right wing groups have high expectations of the Japan Self-Defence Forces reformation. The Japanese Constitution has been perceived as abnormal amidst the complexity of the dynamics in the East China Sea and the role of the Japanese Self-Defence Forces globally (Cooney, 2002).

Abe acted to increase Japanese nationalism by reforming School Education Law. Furthermore, Abe will also upgrade defense institution into a ministry level. Ultimately, Abe will revise the pacific Constitution. Aside from these changes, the LDP had also submitted a draft of changes that could be considered exceeding security issues, which were freedom of the press, return of the Emperor as Head of State, and Japanese nationalism regarding Japanese flag and national anthem. These can be seen as a form of return to the Meiji Restoration Era (1930).

This policy resulted in the emergence of Japanese fascism a decade later in Southeast Asia, especially as the prologue of World War II in East Asia and Southeast Asia. The symbols of resurrection and Japanese

intentions were manifested in Abe's visit to the Yasukuni Shrine.

As a reminder, Japan had stated that the first step of foreign relations with ASEAN was based on good intentions and heart-to-heart relations which had been conducted since 1974 and marked by 1977 visit by Japanese then Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda to some ASEAN countries (Green, 2001:170). Fukuda built confidence that the Japan-ASEAN relations would be conducted without any desire to restore Japan's past hegemony in the region (Green, 2001).

### **Bargaining Cannot Prevent War if the Disputed Items Remain Unresolved**

Abe got high support of around 72% votes in the last election. Indeed, it showed the amount of Japanese people's interests and expectations on his term. Abe programs in the field of economics known as 'Abenomics' had shown progress and gained the trust of the Japanese public. The program was not only related to economic growth but also provided continuation of Japan's strategic steps to overcome deflation, which previously raised difficulty for Japan's economic growth.

The deflation brought Abe's administration to execute three arrows policy in economy sector, namely: increasing efforts to prevent inflation by providing grants amounting up to \$1.4 billion; injecting funds amounting up to \$116 billion (this policy affected Japan's economic growth positively by 4.1% in the first quarter of Abe's term as Prime Minister); and developing economic growth strategies with emphasis on technology development, media, and enhancement of the role of female workers.

Current Abe's economic policy had been predicted earlier. Japan had many difficulties in determining the right choice

over domestic economic policy and post-Cold War foreign policy. Japan's global economic power had been very efficient and it becomes the second largest economic power in the world, but its domestic economic policies had remained inefficiency (Cooney, 2002: Chapter 4).

On the other hand, Japanese Chief Secretary of Cabinet, Yoshihide Suga, had demonstrated a rejection to Abe's policy that was considered to be able to shake Japan's foreign relations and the situation over the East Asian region. Departing from the bargaining model, Japan will then seek to increase its bargaining power in the eyes of China and North Korea.

The US had granted political support by flying a B-52 aircraft over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. This showed the US's seriousness in supporting its partners in East Asia. This is the beginning of the operation procedure to prepare if an escalation of the current conflict increases. The US had been supporting Japan's efforts to strengthen its Self-Defense Forces and raised its defense budget. Furthermore, the US and Japan will follow further military cooperation.

### Implications for Southeast Asia

Several important figures had warned against Abe's policy. Rene L. Pattiradjawane, as quoted in *Kompas*, February 5, 2014. p.10, said that Abe's efforts to increase the defense budget and his visit to the Yasukuni Shrine would have counterproductive impact on Japan. China was not a force to worry because of its untested and largely outdated military equipments. Surely this worry would disappear gradually because of the support from the ultra-right Japanese conservatives to Abe's leadership. The view of this group is not only aimed at Japanese nationalism

but will also have implications for Japanese pacifist Constitution.

Japan's efforts for the reconciliation of the Japanese-Korean war victims also had an influence on its relations with South Korea and the US. This reconciliation brought Japan to establish diplomatic relations with North Korea. However, the US is still containing China limited to its allies, such as North Korea.

Amid many pressures from other states, especially China, Japan desires for survival in order to maintain its sovereignty, integrity, and national interests. China and North Korea's demands for prosecution of Japanese war crimes in the 1950's Japan-Korean War and the 1930's Sino-Japanese War and the provision of comfort women (*geisha*) for Japanese troops had given psychological pressures for Japan in international relations. Even though Japan had given compensation, the issues remained a burden in its interaction with those countries. This situation led Japan to prepare for its bargaining position internationally.

Southeast Asia countries are looking forward to cooperation with Japan, especially in the economic field. The ASEAN countries have economic interests in Japan's assistance to spur investment and development in their respective countries as part of comprehensive relations between Japan and ASEAN (Green, 2001:168). With the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), consisting of Southeast and East Asian countries with the possibility of Northeast Asian countries to join in the future, Japan has an opportunity to discuss the security dialogue with the partner countries in the Southeast Asia region.

As this region does not have a regional great power, ASEAN is easier for Japan to conduct international relations with compared with other regions. In addition, in another region discussions about economic and security interests are also

high. This makes Japan prefers partnership with ASEAN. The establishment warm ASEAN–Japan relation has given positive impacts on the efforts to suppress Chinese hegemony in the region.

Furthermore, the presence of ARF Confidence Building Measures will boost regional stability. The downside is that the ARF and ASEAN are not a pact / military alliance and that co-operation in the face of all the worst possibilities in this region has not been tested. ASEAN does not have co-operation in security issues.

Co-operation among ASEAN countries, China, Japan, and South Korea also gives rise to competition between Japan's and China's investments in Southeast Asia. Japan's investment value in this region is relatively stable while South Korea's has decreased although not significantly. Southeast Asia is an attractive region for investment of those two major powers. Japan is in need for the market in an effort to invigorate the domestic Japanese economy.

However, in the 2011 ASEAN Summit in Bali, China announced plan to increase its investment to reach \$500 billion by 2015. China had also established supporting devices for its plan by making the ASEAN-China Free Trade Zone (FTZ) and ASEAN-China Trade Centre in Beijing. China is also providing \$10 billion for transportation infrastructures in ASEAN countries. On the other hand, the value of Japan's trade transactions with ASEAN countries is still rather large, reaching \$160 billion annually, and will also influence the region's relations with Japan. Those two major powers have increased "influence-race" instead of arms race in Southeast Asia.

ASEAN is so attractive but needs to maintain neutrality over the influence of the two great powers. The diversity of ASEAN members' political dissent and national interests requires its members the seriousness of the role play amidst the rise

of Japan, which essentially Japan's renaissance is done more or less to counter Chinese hegemony. ASEAN will progress in the middle of storms, waves, and cliffs. Thus it requires toughness in building its bargaining position. ASEAN can also prepare for the possibility of future conflicts in the East China Sea and South China Sea.

## Conclusion

Clausewitz stated that "war is the continuation of policy by other means". Japan's domestic political developments has resulted in a changing conservative orientations and estimates of other state actors, especially those in the East China Sea and in general in the South China Sea region and Asia-Pacific.

Long historical background of Japanese fascism in Asia-Pacific region will lead to the effort of balance of power. States will naturally pursue power by combining, separating, or non-aligning with the existing great powers. It will be possible to form alliances or group or another pact. Abe still has strong desire to restore Japan by amending its Self-Defence Forces roles.

Japan's policy in security issues will remain a major focus for countries in the Asia-Pacific, especially Southeast Asia. With the diversity of political views of each state-actor in Southeast Asia, there will be reconfiguration into groups of liberal-democratic, socialist-communist, and non-aligned states. Whether this situation will lead back to a Cold War-like situation or 'Little Cold War' in Asia-Pacific region is still a wait and see. We still have to wait for better further developments.

### About Author

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